

# RECEIVING AN ALIYAH TO THE TORAH

*by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt*

*A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.*

A minimum<sup>(1)</sup> of eight people - a kohen, a levi, five yisraelim and an additional person for maftir<sup>(2)</sup> - are called to the Torah every Shabbos morning. If a kohen is unavailable, either a levi or a yisrael is called instead of him, but if a yisrael is called instead of a kohen, then a levi can no longer be called after him.<sup>(3)</sup> If a levi is unavailable, then the same kohen who was called for kohen is called again.<sup>(4)</sup>

## THE PROCEDURE

The person being called should take the shortest possible route to the bimah so that there is no unnecessary delay. If all of the routes are equal in distance, he should ascend from the right side<sup>(5)</sup>.

Before reciting the blessing,<sup>(6)</sup> the oleh should look inside the Torah to see where the ba'al koreh will begin reading. He then rolls up the scroll and recites Borchu followed by the first blessing. Alternatively, he may leave the scroll unrolled but closes his eyes while reciting Borchu and the blessing.<sup>(7)</sup>

After the reading is over, the sefer should be rolled up and the final blessing recited. The final blessing should not be recited over an open sefer even if one keeps his eyes closed.

The blessings must be recited loud enough so that at least ten people are able to hear them. The poskim are extremely critical of those who recite the blessings in an undertone.<sup>(8)</sup>

## WHO IS CALLED TO THE TORAH?

While it is appropriate and preferable to call to the Torah only those who are G-d fearing Jews who observe the mitzvos, when the need arises or for the sake of peace it is permitted to call even non-observant Jews.<sup>(9)</sup> But under no circumstances is it permitted to call non-believers to the Torah, for their blessings are not considered blessings at all. If absolutely necessary, it may be permitted to accord them honors that do not necessitate a blessing, e.g., hagbahah or gelilah.<sup>(10)</sup>

Most often the aliyos are allocated in rotating order or at the gabbai's discretion. But it is a long-standing tradition which has become universally accepted to mark milestone events by receiving an

aliyah. People marking such events are called chiyuvim, since custom dictates that they are obligated to receive an aliyah. Sometimes, however, there are not enough aliyos for all of the people who are chiyuvim.<sup>(11)</sup> Based on the opinion of the majority of the poskim, the following, in order of priority, is a list of the chiyuvim who are entitled to an aliyah<sup>(12)</sup>:

A chasan<sup>(13)</sup> on the Shabbos before his wedding [or on the Shabbos before he leaves his hometown to travel to his wedding]. <sup>(14)</sup>

A child<sup>(15)</sup> who becomes bar mitzvah on that Shabbos.<sup>(16)</sup>

The father of a newborn<sup>(17)</sup> boy or girl, if the mother is in shul for the first time since giving birth.<sup>(18)</sup>

A chasan on the Shabbos after his wedding, if the wedding took place on Wednesday or later in the week.

A Shabbos yahrtzeit.<sup>(19)</sup>

The father of baby boy<sup>(20)</sup> whose bris will be that Shabbos or during the coming week.<sup>(21)</sup>

A chasan on the Shabbos after his wedding, if his wedding took place before Wednesday.

A yahrtzeit during the upcoming week.<sup>(22)</sup>

One who must recite the ha-Gomel blessing.<sup>(23)</sup>

One who is embarking on or returning from a journey.

An important guest.

## FOOTNOTES:

**1** Some congregations add aliyos while others do not. Since both practices have a basis in halachah, each congregations should follow its own custom. It is preferable not to call more than eleven people altogether; Be'eir Heitev 284:3 alluded to by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 284:5.

**2** Who can be either a kohen, levi or yisrael. Those congregations who add aliyos may also call a kohen or a levi for the last aliyah (called acharon), but should not call kohen or a levi for any of the other additional aliyos; Mishnah Berurah 135:36-37.

**3** O.C. 135:6.

**4** O.C. 135:8.

**5** O.C. 141:7.

**6** A bachelor should don a tallis when receiving an aliyah on Shabbos or Yom Tov mornings. But he need not put on a tallis when receiving an aliyah at other times (Monday and Thursday or Rosh Chodesh, etc); Halichos Shelomo 12, note 29.

**7** Mishnah Berurah 139:19. The third choice, which is to leave the sefer open but turn one's head to the left, is not recommended by the poskim, including the Mishnah Berurah.

**8** O.C. 139:6. See Chayei Adam 31:12.

**9** Preferably, he should be called only after the first seven aliyos; Pe'er ha-Dor 3, pg. 36, oral ruling

from Chazon Ish.

**10** Igros Moshe O.C. 3:12,21,22.

**11** A general rule is that members of a shul have priority over non-members, even if the non-member's chiyuv takes priority over the member's.

**12** This list covers the Shabbos Kerias ha-Torah only.

**13** Who has not been married before.

**14** If both the aufruf and the bar mitzvah want the same aliyah, then the one who is a greater talmid chacham has priority. If that cannot be determined, then the two should draw lots. Lots should be drawn whenever two chiyuvim lay equal claim to an aliyah.

**15** The father of the child, however, is not a chiyuv at all; Sha'ar Efrayim 2:10.

**16** According to some opinions, the same chiyuv applies even if the child became bar mitzvah during the past week; Harav C. Kanivesky (Ishei Yisrael, pg. 409).

**17** Even if the baby was stillborn; Sha'arei Efrayim 2:5.

**18** If the wife is not in shul, then the husband has an obligation to receive an aliyah when 40 days have elapsed from the birth of a male child, or 80 days from the birth of a female child.

**19** A yahrtzeit chiyuv is only for a father or a mother. A yahrtzeit for a father has priority over a yahrtzeit for a mother; Kaf ha-Chayim 284:6.

**20** A father of a baby girl who is naming her on Shabbos has priority over a father of a baby boy whose bris will take place during the week; Da'as Torah 282:7.

**21** According to some opinions, if the bris will take place on Shabbos, then the father is a greater chiyuv than a yahrtzeit on that Shabbos; Ishei Yisrael, pg. 410.

**22** If two people have yahrtzeit during the week, the one whose yahrtzeit is earlier in the week has priority; Kaf ha-Chayim 284:6.

**23** Ha-Gomel can be recited without an aliyah.

---

*Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2000 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc.*

*Rabbi Neustadt is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos.*

*The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Hayeled Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available--please send email to the moderator, Dr. Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org](mailto:jgross@torah.org).*

*The series is distributed by the Harbotzas Torah Division of Congregation Shomre Shabbos, 1801 South Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118--HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra*

---